

National Council for Science and the Environment

1707 H Street, N.W. • Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20006
202/530-5810 • Fax 202/628-4311 • policy@NCSEonline.org • www.NCSEonline.org

**Testimony of the
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Craig M. Schiffries, Ph.D., Senior Scientist**

**Regarding the
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
FY 2005 Budget Request**

**To the
U.S SENATE
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
April 30, 2004**

Summary

The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) urges Congress to appropriate \$1 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in FY 2005, an increase of 6.6 percent over FY 2004. USGS science helps every citizen in the nation by providing critical knowledge on natural hazards, freshwater, geological and biological resources, and mapping. The 6.6 percent increase we propose for the USGS would restore damaging cuts in the budget request, provide full funding for “uncontrollable” cost increases, and allow for modest investments in a few high priority areas that would pay dividends to homeland security, economic development, natural resources management, natural hazards mitigation, and other critical national needs.

NCSE is dedicated to improving the scientific basis for environmental decisionmaking. We are supported by over 500 organizations, including universities, scientific societies, government associations, businesses and chambers of commerce, and environmental and other civic organizations. NCSE promotes science and its relationship with decisionmaking but does not take positions on environmental issues themselves.

The National Council for Science and the Environment thanks the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of increased appropriations for the U.S. Geological Survey.

Federal Investments in R&D

Federal investments in research, development, and science education are essential to the future well-being and prosperity of the nation and deserve the highest priority of Congress. The U.S.

Geological Survey is a critical component of the nation's R&D portfolio. On the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the agency, USGS Director Charles Groat said, "For 125 years, the USGS has provided the Department of the Interior, the nation, and the world with the science needed to make important decisions and safeguard society. As an unbiased science organization, our scientists are dedicated to the timely, relevant, and impartial study of the landscape, our natural resources, and the natural hazards that threaten us."

The USGS supports a unique combination of biological, geological, hydrological and mapping programs that is of great value to decisionmakers. During the past eight years, total federal spending for non-defense research and development has risen by nearly 50 percent from \$37 billion to almost \$55 billion in constant dollars. By contrast, funding for the USGS has been nearly flat. Even this flat funding for the USGS reflects congressional restoration of proposed budget cuts.

NCSE greatly appreciates the sustained support of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies for the U.S. Geological Survey. We are especially grateful for the Subcommittee's bipartisan leadership in restoring past cuts and providing for growth in the USGS budget. We encourage your continued support in this difficult fiscal environment.

U.S. Geological Survey Budget Request for FY 2005

The National Council for Science and the Environment urges Congress to increase the budget of the U.S. Geological Survey to \$1 billion in FY 2005, an increase of 6.6 percent over the FY 2004 enacted level. This increase would provide \$8.1 million to fully fund uncontrollable cost increases, \$26.2 million to restore proposed cuts to existing programs, \$16.1 million to fund new programs in the President's budget, and \$11.6 million for modest investments in a few high priority areas. The additional investment would pay dividends to homeland security, economic development, natural resources management, natural hazards mitigation, and other critical national needs.

Under the FY 2005 budget request, funding for the USGS would fall by \$18.2 million or 1.9 percent to \$919.8 million in FY 2005. After accounting for transfers of existing funds to the agency's new Enterprise Information account, funding for Water Resources would decrease 4.2 percent, funding for Geology would decrease 3.9 percent, funding for Biological Research would decrease 2.3 percent, and funding for the Geography (formerly Mapping) would decrease 1.7 percent (Table 1).

These proposed budget cuts would impair the ability of the USGS to achieve its important mission. In FY 2005, \$6.5 million would be cut from the Mineral Resources program, \$6.4 million from the Water Resources Research Institutes, \$2.8 million from fire ecology and biological fire science activities, and \$1.9 million from partnership funding for the National Map. A variety of other programs would suffer losses as well.

In addition to explicit funding cuts, the FY 2005 budget request would require the USGS to absorb \$8.1 million in uncontrollable cost increases. As in past years, the failure to provide full

funding for uncontrollable costs increases may force the USGS to curtail on-going science that is needed by the nation.

The FY 2005 budget request would provide \$16.1 million for the USGS to establish or expand several promising science initiatives that merit the support of Congress. The request would add \$2.7 million for Klamath Basin-related science, \$1.2 million for science on Department of the Interior landscape initiatives, \$1.0 million for Water 2025, and \$1.0 million for invasive species research.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy cites USGS funding cuts as a factor in the inadequacy of the nation's water quality monitoring network. According to the Commission's draft report, "National [water] monitoring has been greatly reduced, particularly in coastal areas, due to funding cuts at USGS and many partner agencies. The USGS National Streamflow Information Program has eliminated a number of streamgages... Funding cuts have also affected USGS's water quality monitoring programs, resulting in reductions in the number of sampling sites and sampling frequency."

We encourage Congress to provide the USGS with a budget that will allow for the modest growth necessary to address emerging needs for science. After years of stagnant funding and absorbing uncontrollable cost increases, the USGS has a large and growing backlog of monitoring and science needs. The National Council for Science and the Environment urges Congress to appropriate \$1 billion for the USGS in FY 2005. This investment will help the USGS improve monitoring networks, strengthen partnerships, produce high-quality data, and deliver impartial science that serves the needs of the nation. As a founding member and co-chair of the USGS Coalition, NCSE welcomes the opportunity to work with Congress and the Administration to achieve these objectives.

USGS Serves the Nation

The USGS has a truly national mission that extends beyond the boundaries of the nation's public lands to encompass the homes of all citizens through natural hazards monitoring, water resource studies, biological and geological resource assessments, and other activities.

The nation's policymakers—at the national, regional and local levels—are confronting increasing challenges in water management. They need the information provided by USGS streamgages and water quality studies. The USGS streamgage network also supplies the National Weather Service with the information it needs to issue flood warnings.

The USGS has tremendous strength in areas that are critical to homeland security, such as monitoring water resources and producing digital maps that are needed for assessing terrorist threats and responding to terrorist attacks.

The USGS helps protect people across the nation from potentially disastrous consequences of geologic hazards, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, erosion and floods. For

example, USGS sensor systems provide information that can substantially reduce the impact of earthquakes, leading to reduced loss of human life and property.

USGS biologists study wildlife health issues like chronic wasting disease and West Nile virus, which also affects human health. USGS researchers also study the spread of invasive species, which have significant economic (billions of dollars per year), environmental, and public health impacts.

Table 1. U.S. Geological Survey
(budget authority in millions of dollars)

USGS Activity/Subactivity	Budget Authority (\$ Millions)			FY 04-05 Change ¹		FY 04-05 Change adj. for transfers ²	
	FY 2003 Actual	FY 2004 Enacted	FY 2005 Request	Amount (\$ mill.)	Percent	Amount (\$ mill.)	Percent
Mapping, Remote Sensing, & Geog. Investigations							
<i>Cooperative Topographic Mapping</i>	81.1	80.8	71.0	-9.8	-12.1%	-2.0	-2.5%
<i>Land Remote Sensing</i>	35.7	33.7	33.1	-0.5	-1.6%	0.0	0.1%
<i>Geographic Analysis & Monitoring</i>	16.4	15.2	14.8	-0.5	-3.1%	-0.2	-1.4%
Subtotal	133.2	129.8	118.9	-10.8	-8.3%	-2.2	-1.7%
Geologic Hazards, Resources, and Processes							
<i>Geologic Hazard Assessment</i>	75	75.3	73.0	-2.3	-3.0%	-0.9	-1.2%
<i>Geologic Landsc. & Coast. Assess.</i>	78.7	78.4	75.2	-3.1	-4.0%	-1.7	-2.1%
<i>Geologic Resource Assessment</i>	79.5	80.5	72.5	-8.0	-10.0%	-6.6	-8.2%
Subtotal	233.2	234.2	220.8	-13.4	-5.7%	-9.1	-3.9%
Water Resources Investigations							
<i>Hydrolog. Monit., Assess. & Rsch.</i>	136.8	145.3	139.7	-5.6	-3.9%	-2.7	-1.9%
<i>Cooperative Water Program</i>	64.4	64.0	63.0	-1.0	-1.5%	0.1	0.1%
<i>Water Resources Research Act</i>	6	6.4	0.0	-6.4	-100.0%	-6.4	-100.0%
Subtotal	207.2	215.7	202.7	-13.0	-6.0%	-9.0	-4.2%
Biological Research							
<i>Biological Research & Monitoring</i>	132.1	135.1	129.2	-5.9	-4.4%	-3.7	-2.7%
<i>Biological Information</i>	22.8	24.7	24.3	-0.4	-1.6%	0.0	0.0%
<i>Cooperative Research Units</i>	14.9	14.8	14.1	-0.6	-4.4%	-0.5	-3.1%
Subtotal	169.8	174.5	167.6	-6.9	-4.0%	-4.0	-2.3%
Enterprise Information			45.1	45.1	100.0%	45.1	100.0%
Science Support	85.2	90.8	68.7	-22.1	-24.3%	5.1	5.6%
Facilities	90.8	93.0	95.9	3.0	3.2%	3.0	3.2%
TOTAL	919.3	938.0	919.8	-18.2	-1.9%	-18.2	-1.9%

Source: *The Interior Budget in Brief: Fiscal Year 2005*, USGS FY 2005 Budget documents and NCSE analysis

¹ Change from enacted FY 2004 USGS appropriations to the President's FY 2005 budget request for USGS.

² These columns include the change from the enacted FY 2004 USGS appropriations to the President's FY 2005 budget request for USGS, adjusted to compensate for transfers from disciplinary accounts and programs to the new Enterprise Information account.